

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005024511







## LETTER FROM MR. BOTTS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
January 29, 1848.

*To the Editors of the Whig :*

GENTLEMEN : Your correspondent from this city, who is a most worthy and estimable, but sadly mistaken gentleman, and who, I apprehend, from the character of his communications, is rather too credulous for the political atmosphere about Washington, has, I perceive, in a letter bearing date the 23d instant, and published in the Whig of the 27th, represented to you, and through you to my constituents, that Mr. Clingman, of North Carolina, and myself, are the only two representatives from the South, together with a few from the West, opposed to the nomination of Gen. Taylor. Now, I do not mean to say who Mr. Clingman, or any body else, is for or against; each gentleman can answer for himself as he sees fit. But I do mean to say, that your correspondent has been led into a most egregious error, if he supposes that the friends of Mr. Clay in Congress, from the South and West, (I mean those who prefer his nomination as well as his election,) are limited to two, or twenty; but it has been by such errors of calculation that public opinion abroad has been manufactured, as to the true condition of things in Washington.

That I stand alone, of the Virginia delegation, in expressing my preference for Clay, is true. That I regret not having the support of any one of my colleagues is equally true. They, no doubt, are honestly reflecting their own views, and what they believe to be the views and wishes of their constituents. So am I. But if I stood alone in Congress, or the nation upon this question, *alone* would I continue to stand, *unmoral and unshaken*.

I am not only a stern and inflexible Whig myself upon principle, but I represent a stern and inflexible Whig district. I need not therefore expect to retain me in place, and if I did I should not get them. Nor shall I court their support by any other means, than by persuasion, that I represent faithfully what I believe to be the true interests of the country. Other gentlemen, who are representing decidedly Democratic, or doubtful districts, are but reflecting the true condition of those districts, perhaps, by supporting a doubtful, or "no-party" candidate.

I have been laboring for twenty odd years in this great Whig cause, for the triumph of my principles, and the principles of the party with which I have been associated; with what zeal and success let my own district, and others, answer. I cannot, (let it please or offend whom it may,) *I will not*, be brought to the confession, that my struggles and efforts against the contending party have been factious, and stimulated only by a desire to put the *ins* out, and the *outs* in, by giving in my adhesion to a candidate whose principles are unknown to me and to you.

Political life has lost many of its charms for me. The only gain I have derived from it has been a name for honesty and devotion to principle, which I am not yet prepared to sacrifice, by yielding my principles to the custody of one, whose policy, if elected, is veiled in secrecy and mystery.

If Gen. Taylor is a "*no-party candidate*," which is the only position he has yet assumed, then I am not of his party; for I am a *party man*, and that *party* is the *Whig party*. I have nothing to ask, and I want nothing of Mr. Clay or Gen. Taylor, or any other Executive, and I will not do what I would regard as a surrender of my principles, to make any man President; and, therefore, I cannot advocate the nomination of a gentleman who has never filled a political position, who comes fresh from the tented field, heralded only by his military achievements, and whose political views are carefully concealed as well from his friends as his opponents.

While I am not indifferent to the domestic policy of our Government, I look with a much more anxious eye to our foreign policy. *For the present* a far more important question is presented—one that overshadows and absorbs all others: I mean the Mexican war, and the objects for which it is to be prosecuted.

I am unalterably opposed to the subjugation of Mexico and to the annexation of any part of the Mexican territory, and will support no man for the Presidency who is in favor of admitting the Mexican race to an equal participation in the administration of our free institutions. Nay, more than that, I can support no man who is not known to be opposed to it. I believe that the subjugation of Mexico, and its annexation to the United States, (which is now the object avowed,) will decide the fate of this Union; and I think it matters little how soon it shall be dissolved, when that scheme of infatuation and madness shall have been accomplished. And am I asked, at such a time, and in such a crisis of our fate, to discard a wise, practical, experienced statesman, who commands the confidence and esteem of every true Whig throughout the broad limits of the land, to take up a soldier from the field, flushed with victory, and whose trade is war—whose opinions upon this great question are unknown to me and to you—from whom we have not had the slightest intimation of a purpose or a wish—only because he comes recommended as committed to no principles and to no policy, beyond his own will and judgment.

"Throw physic to the dogs—I'll none of it."

I have had enough of your no-party men.

Let me ask one question: If Gen. Taylor is elected as a "*no-party*" candidate, will he prove a "*no-party*" President? If he should, then he will not suit me, or any other Whig. If not, would he not disappoint those who elected him? If a majority of the people are so dissatisfied with the principles and measures of both the great parties of this country as to elect a President belonging to neither, could he select a Whig Cabinet, and adopt Whig measures, without a betrayal of the trust confided to him by those who elected him? Or, in other words, if he is elected upon the ground that he will not avow himself a Whig, and commit himself to Whig policy, would he not be as fully justified in selecting a Locofoco as a Whig Cabinet, and in adopting Locofoco as Whig policy? Must he not, of necessity, have either a "*no-party*" or *divided Cabinet*, and would he not have to *compromise* all his measures, or take a little here, and a little there, from each, or deceive those who elected him? If so, all I have to say is, that my services cannot be demanded in any such cause. If we are to have him as a Whig President, let us also have him as a Whig candidate, or else we may look for a disorganization of the Whig party.

I was not born a Whig, as some gentlemen claim; but I have lived a Whig, and a Whig I expect to die.

If Gen. Taylor, whose military services I hold in high appreciation, shall so develop his principles as to secure to himself the nomination of a National Convention, (which, in his present position, I regard as impossible,) he shall not only have my vote, but my active service, be it worth little or much. But, as matters

stand at present, "with all the lights now before me," especially from the great Whig region of the country, [which I think your correspondent has not consulted,] and without whose aid it is impossible for us to succeed, I am not only satisfied that Mr. Clay is the most available candidate, but the only one with whom success is certain.

I have reason to believe Mr. Clay has lost no strength in those States that he carried in 1844, and that he is greatly strengthened in many that he then lost—especially in New York, which our friends assure us is beyond the possibility of a doubt, to say nothing of New Hampshire, (of which many of our friends are confident,) Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, together with Pennsylvania, which may be carried by selecting a suitable man to place on his ticket—say either Scott or Clayton. With these views, I shall do as I believe my constituents will do, not give him up for any man of doubtful principles, and of more doubtful success.

When I say I feel confident that Mr. Clay can be elected, I know I shall be answered, "*so you thought in 1844.*" True, I did—so did we all—but that is no reason we should be deceived again; it is, on the contrary, the best reason why we should not be. I am only rendered the more cautious in my calculations by that unexpected and disastrous defeat.

The Whigs of my own district will recollect the predictions of the true-hearted a year ago as to my own success; they spoke then, as now, of the want of availability. The result speaks for itself; and so it will in this case. The same causes that operated to swell my majority so far beyond all former calculation, will operate in the next Presidential election to swell the majority of Mr. Clay. He will not only *not* have the Catholic excitement, the foreign influence, the Native American party, the annexation of Texas, &c., &c., &c., to operate against him, but they will all work in his favor; and, most of all, the wicked and horrible war, and the ruinous condition of the country, which will be plainly spread before every man's eyes before the election comes on, will swell his triumph, in my belief, beyond all calculation that his most sanguine friends have yet made; and if the Whig party are sincere in their expression of preference for him, my advice to them is, to hold on to him as their only sheet-anchor, for the conservative principles of Whiggery.

At all events, let us wait the action of a National Convention. It will be time enough for us, who prefer him, to give up Mr. Clay, when the Whigs of the nation, in grand council assembled, shall recommend General Taylor to us as a proper and most available candidate. Until then I shall stick fast, and remain true to the Old National Republican faith.

Respectfully,

JOHN M. BOTTS.











